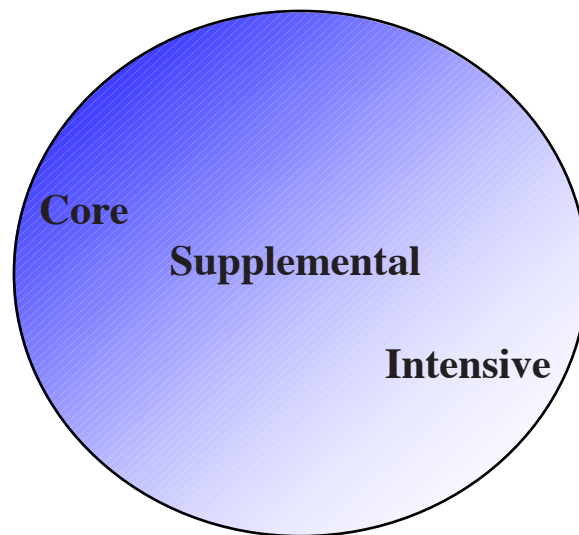


Instructional Decision Making

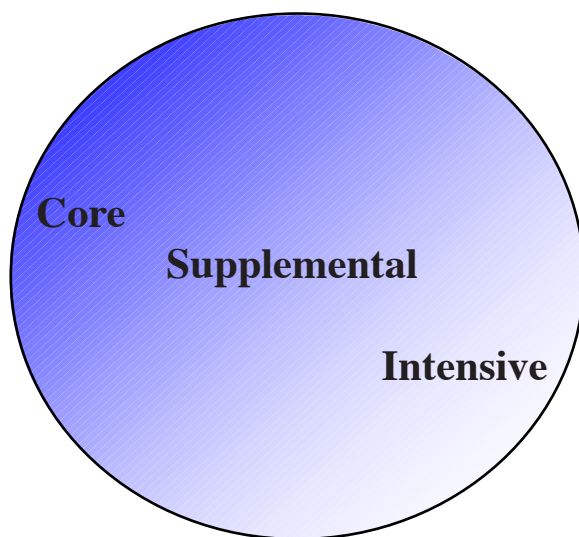


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NOTE: This document is written for those who have completed orientation training. It is neither a training manual nor a comprehensive document that is designed to enable school personnel to implement IDM prior to training. This document is designed to be a reference guide that accompanies appropriate training and will be used as a reference after training. For further information, contact Dr. Cynthia Knight and Eric Neessen.

Instructional Decision Making



Version 2.4

March 2006

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Name	Occupation	Employer
Brad Baker	Principal	Creston Schools
Bruce Jensen	Regional Director	AEA 267
Chris Rinner	Instructional Services	DE
Chuck Solheim	Instructional Services	AEA 9
Cindy Laughead	Parent Advocate	AEA 9
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Joe Ulman	Special Education Director	Retired AEA 3
Kara Krohn	Title 1 Consultant	DE
Kathy Hinders	Instructional Services	DE
Kris Wolzen	Ed Services Director	AEA 9
Kristi Upah	School Psychologist	AEA 11
Kent Ryan	Instructional Services	DE
Lana Michelson	CFCS Director	DE
Linda Hansen	Special Education	AEA 10
Linda Linn	Instructional Services	AEA 8
Linda Ryan	School Psychologist	AEA 9
Lou Howell	Instructional Services	Retired - AEA 5
Mark Draper	Special Education	AEA 13
Mark Moss	Principal	Newton Schools
Marlys McNutt-Nail	Spec Ed Teacher	Webster City Schools
Marty Ikeda	Research	AEA 11
Marvin Lewis	Special Ed Director	Retired - AEA 6
Nancy Palmer	School Psychologist	Des Moines Public Schools
Neta Stevenson	Special Ed Director	Retired - AEA 6
Rob Brookhart	Special Education	AEA 11
Ruth Neagle	School Psychologist	AEA 1
Sharon Halcomb	Instructional Services	AEA 9
Sharon Kurns	Special Education	AEA 11
Shawna Dickey	Gen Ed Teacher	Fairfield Schools
Susan Stock	Special Ed Teacher	Webster City Schools
Tom Salkeld	School Psychologist	AEA 267
Toni Van Cleve	Special Education	DE

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Editors and Reviewers

Norma Lynch	Iowa Dept. of Education
Penny Bisignano	Retired AEA 11
Tom Cooley	Iowa Dept. of Education
Lois Irwin	Iowa Dept. of Education
Julie Melcher	Iowa Dept. of Education
Debbie Boring	Iowa Dept. of Education
Barb Byrd	Iowa Dept. of Education
Elizabeth Calhoun	Iowa Dept. of Education
Brandie Gean	Iowa Dept. of Education

National Advisors:

Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D.	University of Texas - Austin
Jeannie Wanzek	University of Texas - Austin
Rob Horner, Ph.D.	Univeristy of Oregon

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Sec. I — OVERVIEW

As Iowa schools face continuing challenges to meet the needs of **all** students, the resources of the entire educational community will need to function as an integrated system to support the common goal of increased student achievement. This will require educators to work differently to respond to the students' instructional (academic and behavioral) abilities and make quality decisions about the use of educational resources.

The Instructional Decision Making (IDM) process focuses on instruction by using data regarding students' responses to past instruction to guide future educational decisions. This process is based on the proactive concept of early assistance and matches the amount of resources to the nature of the students' needs. The Iowa Department of Education supports, but does not mandate, this process.

Guiding Principles

The following principles are the foundation for IDM.

- All students are part of the general education system and have access to the general education curriculum.
- There is shared responsibility for student achievement across the entire school community.
- The best way to address student learning abilities that exceed core instruction is to be proactive; therefore, any process of instructional decision-making must allow for the earliest possible assistance.
- Differentiated instruction is an essential part of the core instruction program.
- Accurate reliable data are essential to determine the instructional abilities of all students and to match resources to those abilities.
- Instructional decisions are based on multiple sources of data.
- The effectiveness of instruction is routinely monitored; continuing formative data are used to indicate when changes in instruction are needed.
- Parents are vital members of the team to support students.
- Administrators and teacher leadership teams are vital in the instructional leadership and data based decision-making of a district and school.
- Quality professional development is required to support implementation of a systemic effort to support IDM and ensure that teachers have adequate tools and strategies.
- Students and teachers must have the necessary supports and resources to meet the needs of all students.

Key Features

Although the Instructional Decision Making process (IDM) is implemented differently in various school settings, there are key features to a systemic decision-making process that are necessary if **all** students are to be successful.

The IDM process begins with all students having access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum provided by the school through the core instructional program. Assessment data are gathered on a regular basis and each student's response to instruction is evaluated. Students with additional instructional needs are provided supplemental and core instruction. Those students with significant needs are provided intensive instruction in addition to core instruction. Performance is monitored and students move from one cycle of instruction to another as indicated by the data. In this system, all students receive instruction to address their unique learning needs.

Instruction

It is important to have high expectations for all students. Some children will require more resources, intense instruction, and/or advanced instruction in order to experience success. Inherent in this process is the understanding that students respond differently to instruction, and data collected regarding student performance must guide instruction. Within the IDM process, fluid and flexible instructional cycles are identified:

- **Core instruction** is the combination of instructional practices, materials, and strategies that compose the instruction provided in the general education classroom. All students receive core instruction. Core instruction implements a guaranteed and viable curriculum with rigor and relevance.
 - Guaranteed Curriculum – is taught the way it was intended (fidelity)
 - Viable Curriculum – can be adequately addressed in the time available
 - Rigor – all student areas are challenged
 - Relevance – the curriculum fosters transitions between elementary school, middle school, high school, post-secondary, and to the world of work

If data indicate that core instruction is not sufficiently meeting the instructional abilities of most students, improvement efforts must focus on studying and refining the core instruction while still examining individual student performance. Changes may be needed in the area of curriculum, instruction, assessment, environment, and/or system.

Data collection, including continuing formal and informal classroom assessments, and analysis of data provide information regarding students' responsiveness to the core instruction. When the data indicate an individual student's instructional abilities are beyond core instruction, then additional supports are required. This information is used to identify student(s) who need supplemental or intensive instruction in addition to core instruction. The continual analysis of available data determines the need to continue, discontinue, or provide more concentrated instruction. (See section entitled "Assessment.")

- **Supplemental instruction** occurs in addition to core instruction. It is not a pull-out program and does not replace core instruction. It is based on individual student data. Supplemental instruction is instruction that is available for students identified as exceeding or not meeting core-learning expectations. Supplemental instruction is the combination of research-based/evidence-based instructional practices and a positive learning environment, designed to match identified student needs. Supplemental instruction extends the core instruction and provides more intensity, immediacy of feedback and consistency of support. When appropriate, students with similar needs are grouped for instruction. The continual analysis of available data determines the need to continue, discontinue or change instruction.
- **Intensive instruction** occurs in addition to core instruction, is not a pull-out program and does not replace core instruction. Intensive instruction is instruction that is available for students identified as *significantly* exceeding or *significantly not* meeting core-learning expectations. Intensive instruction is in addition to core instruction. Intensive instruction is the combination of research-based/evidence-based instructional practices and a positive learning environment designed to match the identified student needs. Intensive instruction extends the core instruction, is systematic and explicit. Typically, intensive instruction provides more time, intensity, practice, and immediacy of feedback than found within the supplemental cycle. For a highly proficient learner, intensive instruction may include advanced levels of the curriculum and instruction that take into account the student's unique skills and needs. When appropriate, students with similar needs are grouped for instruction. The continual analysis of available data determines the need to continue, discontinue or change instruction.

Assessment

Within the IDM process, student performance data currently existing within the system are the primary sources for decision-making. Additional assessments can be added if a local education agency (LEA) determines the need exists for more data. IDM does not require new data or new systems of data collection; however, assessment data of sufficient quality (technically adequate, objective, of sufficient amount) are needed to make instructional decisions.

The following types of assessments, currently found within the educational system, are used to gather data to inform and guide current and future instruction:

- **Screening** is a method of collecting data for the purpose of identifying low and high performing students. Screening is an initial step in instructional decision-making and is necessary to identify needs early. Screening assessment activities provide data to (a) inform instruction, (b) help determine if there are systemic needs in curriculum, instruction and/or environment, and (c) guide decisions about supplemental or intensive instruction for those students who may require more intensive or advanced instruction. Screening occurs at many levels and includes individual screening, classroom screening, grade level screening, building screening and district screening.
- **Diagnostic assessment** determines *what* the student needs to learn next (this includes behavior). Student performance is examined in order to design effective instruction. Diagnostic assessment leads school staff to consider instruction, curriculum, environment, classroom work, teacher

observation and other relevant information. Diagnostic assessment involves gathering information from multiple sources to determine *why* students are not benefiting from core instruction due to advanced or deficit learning needs.

- **Formative assessment** involves frequent, continuing, systematic monitoring of student performance. Formative assessment occurs with individuals in core, supplemental, and intensive instruction with varying degrees of frequency. Formative assessment ensures the regular and systematic collection of data relevant to stated goals (student progress, implementation of innovations) and answers the questions, (a) How does the student's progress compare to past performance? (b) How does the student's progress compare to peers? and (c) Is the student responding to instruction?

Sufficient Data for Instructional Decisions

The rigor of the assessments used matches the significance of the instructional decisions to be made. Specific data are necessary to determine continuing instructional decisions for all students. Data gathering and analysis help identify student strengths and weaknesses in order to guide appropriate instruction. Assessment data help determine the instruction needed to enhance student learning. These data also contribute to decisions regarding services for English Language Learners, Gifted and Talented, Title I, Special Education, and other student targeted services and programs.

Proactive Instruction

This process neither waits for students to fail nor does it impede the progress of highly proficient students. The intent of IDM is to be proactive in the response to instructional needs rather than reactive. The key is frequent, continuing data collection to inform instructional decisions, rather than waiting for summative end-of-year or end-of-unit data.

Seamless Process

It is necessary to have a seamless process of decision-making across all levels of student instructional need (proficient, highly proficient, less than proficient). A seamless process emphasizes shared responsibility for the students within a school and creates a seamless response to student's with instructional needs using various resources, programs, and services developed for those with similar instructional needs. This is done with collaboration and communication across contents, services and programs within the educational system using parents as partners.

Evidence-Based

The IDM process complements the Iowa Professional Development Model's (IPDM) decision-making process for adopting evidenced-based research practices. Such practices are appropriately matched to the needs of students and are implemented as intended. IPDM is used to provide professional development when the data indicate that core, supplemental and/or intensive instruction could be more effective. When evidence-based research practices are not available, it is prudent to utilize known best practice while continuing to explore the external knowledge base for powerful instructional strategies.

Summary

IDM is a process that provides a common framework and a standardized communication mechanism for instructional decision-making. It aligns with and supports all services and programs within a school.

The IDM process is:

- student focused
- focused on appropriate instruction
- for all students
- data driven
- a collaborative effort
- proactive
- a seamless continuum of instructional delivery
- fluid, interactive and responsive

IDM complements:

- Curriculum Analysis
 - ✓ Iowa Technical Adequacy Project (ITAP)
 - ✓ Surveys of Enacted Curriculum
- Student Issues
 - ✓ Talented and Gifted
 - ✓ English Language Learners
 - ✓ At-Risk
 - ✓ Migrant
 - ✓ Multi-cultural/Gender Fair (MCGF)
 - ✓ Neglected and Delinquent
 - ✓ Special Education
 - ✓ Title I
- Federal Mandates
 - ✓ No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
 - ✓ Schools In Need of Assistance (SINA)
 - ✓ Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)
- State Initiatives
 - ✓ Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)
 - ✓ Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM)
 - ✓ Individual Teacher Career Plan (ITCP)
 - ✓ District Career Development Plan (DCDP)
 - ✓ Every Student Counts
 - ✓ Every Child Reads
 - ✓ Every Learner Inquires
 - ✓ Support for Schools in Need of Assistance

IDM represents educational best practice and helps schools evaluate their current available resources to meet the instructional and behavioral abilities of **all** students.

Glossary of Terms

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is instruction that has been adjusted or altered to meet the individual learning needs of the student. It may occur within core, supplemental or intensive instructional cycles.

Differentiation may include adjustments to strategies and/or to time, intensity, presentation, immediacy of feedback, amount of practice, group size, explicitness, and other alterable factors affecting learning.

Environment

The learning environment includes all the factors within the setting that may potentially affect learning; for example, physical structures, climate, culture, behavioral expectations, routines, etc.

Exceed Core Instruction

Exceed core instruction refers to high and low performing students at-risk for not having their needs met in core instruction. The needs may be academic or behavioral in nature.

Guaranteed Curriculum

A curriculum is guaranteed when it is taught the way it was intended to be taught. The curriculum is taught with fidelity.

Evidence-Based Research

Evidence-based research applies rigorous and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge through systematic empirical methods. It also draws upon observation or experimentation and involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the hypotheses. The research has also been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous objective scientific review.

Viable Curriculum

Viable curriculum means that the articulated curriculum content for a given course or grade level can be adequately addressed in the time available.¹

¹ Marzano, R.,(2003) *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action*, p.25.